



## Letter from the Chair Making a Difference in the "Real World"

The stereotype of university professors is that we live in Ivory Towers, removed from real-life problems. That may have a grain of truth: universities are exciting places to work and learn, filled with enthusiastic students and scholars. In that sense, they are ideal worlds. Yet like most stereotypes, the simple picture obscures more than it reveals. In fact, rather than being removed from real-life problems, most political science students and professors are passionate about their research precisely because they are concerned about real political and policy problems, and because they hope to illuminate underlying causes and discover possible solutions. Because of their engagement with current issues, UH Political Science professors are often called upon to advise policy-makers, or to give media interviews to provide context for understanding breaking news events.

Here is a sample of faculty members' activities in this area since the start of the summer

semester: **Lydia Tiede** was interviewed about the Supreme Court's ruling on affirmative action, **Brandon Rottinghaus** gave interviews about the Texas Legislative Session, **Jeronimo Cortina** has been working with 16 United Nations agencies to prepare a report for the upcoming High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development. Elsewhere in this issue you will read about how former students of our programs are using their skills in other settings, from city management to national security.

At the beginning of July I had my own encounters with the front-lines of democratic politics when I gave a presentation on electoral regulation at a meeting in Warsaw, Poland sponsored by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), a division of the Organization For Security and Cooperation in Europe (see picture). At this meeting, election officials and pro-democracy activists from



democracies and semi-democracies in Central Europe and Asia passionately debated the best ways to stem electoral fraud, to check corruption, and to strengthen respect for human rights. These sessions were an inspiring reminder that our research and teaching about representation and the rule of the law are not "just academic": they can make important contributions to improving the quality of democracy in our own country and elsewhere.

--Susan Scarrow  
sscarrow@uh.edu

### Save the Date:

**October 24, 2013**

7-8:30 pm

UH Rockwell Pavilion

**The John P. McGovern  
Award Lecture in Health  
and Family Values**

**Prof. Daniel Carpenter**

Harvard University

Dept. of Government

**"How Regulation  
Makes Markets in  
American Health Care"**

Please join us for this public  
lecture on a timely topic.

### Contents

PhDs in Public Service	2
Alumni Spotlight	2
MPA Program	2
Faculty News	3
Graduate Student Focus	3
National Security Studies	4

## Visit Us at the APSA Meetings in Chicago

The University of Houston/Texas Universities reception at the APSA (American Political Science Association) Annual Meetings has returned to its traditional timeslot: 10-11:30 PM on Friday evening.

This is a great opportunity to meet or catch-up with former and current students and faculty. We hope to see many of you there!

**University of Houston/  
Texas Universities Reception**  
APSA Annual Meetings

**10-11:30 pm**  
**Friday, August 30, 2013**  
**\*Honore' Room\***  
**Palmer House Hotel**

## Improving Public Service with a PhD

Can earning a PhD help get potholes filled, balance budgets, or help politicians form consensus on public policy problems? Several UH alumni with backgrounds in city management and University of Houston PhDs in Public Administration recently exchanged thoughts on this subject. All of them started their doctoral studies after many years of public service, and all agreed that their coursework and research had made them better at their jobs.

According to **Dr. James Thurmond**, who has 30 years of experience in city management in Texas and who currently directs the UH Master of Public Administration Program: “the PhD improved my world view, significantly improved my problem-solving skills (which I thought were pretty good

before the PhD), improved my appreciation for research design, and helped me to make better sense of situations and the world. I definitely think differently post-PhD than before [and for the better]!”

**Dr. Sherman Yehl** served as city manager in cities in Iowa, Texas and Florida. He held the post of CEO of the Woodlands Corporation during most of the time that he was working on his doctoral degree. Currently he is an assistant professor of Public Administration at Valdosta State University in Georgia, and interim coordinator of their MPA and DPA programs. He comments about his doctoral education, “I wish I knew what I now know when I was a city manager,” and that his studies “exposed me to the many changes in the availability of information. It

also challenged my thinking on the viability of (relatively) small governments.” “What really should happen. . . is that after someone has been a city manager for 5-10 years they should go back to school!”

**Dr. Mike Castro** currently serves as city manager of the Houston-area community of Jersey Village, a post that he held throughout his doctoral studies. Before moving to Jersey Village he was the city manager in two other Texas cities. He sums up the value of his doctoral studies in this way: “Theory trumps Gut Instinct”. He adds, “My PhD continues to provide the theoretical toolbox that enables me to recommend a deliberative process. It is the glue that allows me to move the conversation beyond reflexive statements rooted in personal bias.”

### Alumni Spotlight: Recent Books By UH Political Science Alumni

David Barker and Christopher Carman. 2012. *Representing Red and Blue: How the Culture Wars Change the Way Citizens Speak and Politicians Listen*. Oxford University Press.

David Denver, Christopher Carman and Robert Johns. 2012. *Elections and Voters in Britain*. Palgrave Macmillan.

B. Dan Wood. 2012. *Presidential Saber Rattling: Causes and Consequences*. Cambridge University Press

## Master of Public Administration Flourishes

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at UH currently enrolls approximately 50 Houston-area and international students in its two-year degree program. Students come from a variety of professional backgrounds, including healthcare, local and regional government, federal agencies such as NASA, and non-profit organizations. Many students continue to work full-time while taking their degrees, enabling them to quickly employ the new skills that they learn.

Coursework includes seminars in public finance, budgeting, quantitative methods, policy implementation, administrative theory and public management. As the final stage in their degree, students complete a practice-oriented capstone project. Several of the courses in the MPA program are taught by faculty members in the Political Science Department. Some students from the MPA program subsequently transfer to the doctoral program in Political Science to earn their PhD.



**Dr. James Thurmond**

## Faculty News

### Promotions

We congratulate **Scott Basinger** and **Jeffrey Church** on their recent promotions to associate professor with tenure.

### Teaching Awards

In April the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences recognized two Political Science professors for their teaching excellence.

Assistant Professor **Ryan Kennedy** won the Ross M. Lence Social Science teaching prize. His award citation mentioned his research collaboration with both graduate and undergraduate students, and his ability to get students excited about statistics. It noted that "a student from his methods class wrote that Kennedy encouraged his 'passion and curiosity' and helped him realize his 'affinity for

statistics.' He calls this one of his "most enjoyable experiences ever" – a phrase not often used to describe statistics classes!"

### Associate Professor

**Jeffrey Church** won Ross M. Lence Humanities teaching prize for his work in the field of political theory. He has been a leader in the *Phronesis* program in Politics and Ethics. The award committee was impressed by Church's "highly creative assignments. For a class on democratic theory, he had one group design an imaginary democracy, another group generate policy proposals to address that democracy's problems, and then held a political "summit" where citizens discussed policy recommendations." His nominator described him as the model of a "Scholar-Educator".



### Retirements

In May we bid farewell to two long-time faculty members who retired after playing central roles in the development of our department, **Professor Donald Lutz** and **Professor Harrell Rodgers**. Professor Rodgers was recognized at the Political Science Alumni Event in February.

Professor Lutz was honored at a special reception held in conjunction with the UH Honors College, which Dr. Lutz helped to establish in the 1970s. The picture above shows Dr Lutz at the reception with current and former students **Sarah Mallams, Kang Chen, and Claudia Baba**

### News from Doctoral Alumni

**Stefan Brooks** was awarded tenure and promotion to associate professor at Lindsey Wilson College (Columbia, Kentucky).

**Adolfo Santos** has been appointed Dean of the School of Liberal Arts at Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC) in Lawrenceville, Georgia. Adolfo leaves a post as Professor of Political Science at the University of Houston Downtown, where he has served as Chair of the Department of Political Science and as special assistant to the president.

## Graduate Student Focus

Congratulations to Spring 2013 Ph.D. graduates: **Michelle Belco, Bianca Easterly, Amalia Mena-Mora, Marwa Shalaby, Alan Steinberg.**

In July **Amalia Mena-Mora** presented a paper on "Judicial Independence in Mexican State Administrative Courts" in Dublin, Ireland at a Comparative Judicial Studies conference.

**Alan Steinberg** has been awarded a post-doctoral fellowship at Sam Houston State University.

**Abdullah Aydogan** was awarded an APSA travel grant to present his paper at the upcoming APSA meetings, on "Institutional Foundations of Military Coups d'Etat: Constitutional Design, Government Structure, and Military Centrality".

Dept. of Political Science  
University of Houston  
PGH 447  
Houston, TX 77204-3011

Phone  
713-743-3890

Fax  
713-743-3927

E-mail  
PoliticalScience@uh.edu

[Political Science Web Page](#)

## Exploring Political Science Minors: National Security Studies

*UH Political Science faculty members help coordinate four interdisciplinary minors: The Honors College Phronesis Minor in Politics and Ethics, and minors in National Security Studies, Quantitative Social Sciences, and Values, Law, and Policy. Each of these minors gives students opportunities to explore areas of special interest to them. In this issue we profile the National Security Studies Minor. Look for more details about other minors in future issues.*

In a small situation room, a dozen figures are gathered around a table, intent on various documents and maps. Looming over the table, a video wall portrays more maps, data feeds, videos of helicopters, and the White House briefing room. Some of the figures are uniformed, some are in coat-and-tie . . . one looks as if he just rolled out of bed. In the preceding days, a meteorite has come to earth in North Africa, and those in the room are members of a crisis management team overseeing the U.S. government's humanitarian response. The situation is complicated by the proximity of the site to regions that are extremely politically unstable. One of the figures announces that satellite imagery shows that

a collection of people – perhaps terrorists – on the eastern perimeter of the U.S. position is increasing in number. Those around the table bark out questions and answers, assessing the seriousness of the situation, the assets that they have available, and the options for response.

The figures in the room are students participating in a crisis management exercise – Political Science 4396 – the capstone course for the National Security Studies Minor. The situation room is a computer lab in Agnes Arnold Hall at the University of Houston. The course requires them to integrate what they have learned in their coursework by playing the roles of civilian officials and members of the military who are addressing a crisis situation in an interagency environment. One of the unusual features of the UH capstone course is that it brings together civilian and ROTC students, mirroring the blending of the military and civilian agencies typical of real crisis situations. The collaboration of academic departments and the ROTC program makes it the only course of its kind in the country according to a 2009 article about it in the *Chronicle of*

*Higher Education*. This program helps prepare students for careers as diverse as being a diplomat, a cryptologist, an area-studies specialist, an interpreter, or an intelligence, policy, or economic analyst.

The program was founded in 2009 with the support of a UH course development grant by **Col. Phil Bossert**, Commanding Officer of UH's Air Force ROTC program, and Professor **Greg Weiher** of political science. Students take courses in international relations, foreign policy, military and diplomatic history, area studies, cyber security, leadership, and strategy and decision sciences. Typically between 30 and 40 students are enrolled in the minor. It was not possible to declare the minor until Fall, 2011, so the band of alumni remains small. However, one of the first graduates, **Ben Phares**, went on to complete a master's degree in international relations at Texas A&M, and is now an intelligence analyst with the National Security Agency.

The minor is currently under the directorship of Greg Weiher.

### Stay in Touch!

- E-mail us & send us your news: PoliticalScience@uh.edu
- Make sure that we have your current e-mail address to receive event invitations and newsletters.
- Support our students: visit the "Donate" section of our Department web page for more details.
- Visit our Department web page and Facebook Page for more news.